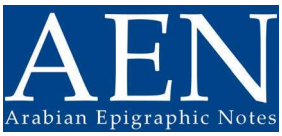

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New dated inscriptions (Nabataean and pre-Islamic Arabic) from a site near al-Jawf, ancient Dūmah, Saudi Arabia

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New dated inscriptions (Nabataean and pre-Islamic Arabic) from a site near al-Jawf, ancient Dūmah, Saudi Arabia

Laïla Nehmé (CNRS, Orient & Méditerranée)

Abstract

This article publishes eighteen inscriptions: seventeen in the Nabataean script and one in the pre-Islamic Arabic script, all from the area of al-Jawf, ancient Dūmat al-Jandal, in north-west Arabia. It includes the edition of the texts as well as a discussion of their significance. The pre-Islamic Arabic text, DaJ144PAr1, is dated to the mid-sixth century AD. It is important because it is the first text firmly dated to the sixth century AD from north-west Arabia. The Nabataean texts are interesting because they are dated to the beginning of the second century AD and they mention both cavalrymen (Nabataean *pršy'*) and a centurion (Nabataean *qnṭrywn'*).

Keywords: Nabataean inscriptions Pre-Islamic Arabic Dumah Saudi Arabia Roman Army

1 Introduction

The archaeological and epigraphic surveys undertaken between 2009 and 2017 by the Saudi–Italian–French Archaeological Project in the regions al-Jawf (ancient Dūmah) and Sakākā, in north-west Saudi Arabia,[1] have led to the discovery of a number of sites, twelve of which contain Nabataean, Nabataeo-Arabic (i.e. inscriptions which are clearly transitional between Nabataean and Arabic) or pre-Islamic Arabic (i.e. clearly written in a recognisable form of Arabic script) inscriptions.[2] The author is responsible, in the project, for the publication of the texts written in these three categories of scripts.[3] The examination, in early 2017, of all the photographs taken by the team members

[1]This project is directed by Guillaume Charloux (CNRS, Orient & Mediterranée, France) and Romolo Loreto (University of Naples "L'Orientale", Italy).

[2]To the inscriptions photographed *in situ* should be added a four line inscription carved on a movable stone, photographed by G. Charloux in a window display of the Sudayrī Foundation building in Sakākā. A label identifies it as having been brought there by Dr. Nawāf Dūbyān al-Rāshid. The text is unfortunately not readable on the available photographs.

[3]Note that two other epigraphists, Frédéric Imbert and Jérôme Norris, are responsible for the publication of the Arabic and Ancient North Arabian inscriptions respectively. I am grateful to G. Charloux, the co-director of the project, for putting all the project's material at my disposal.

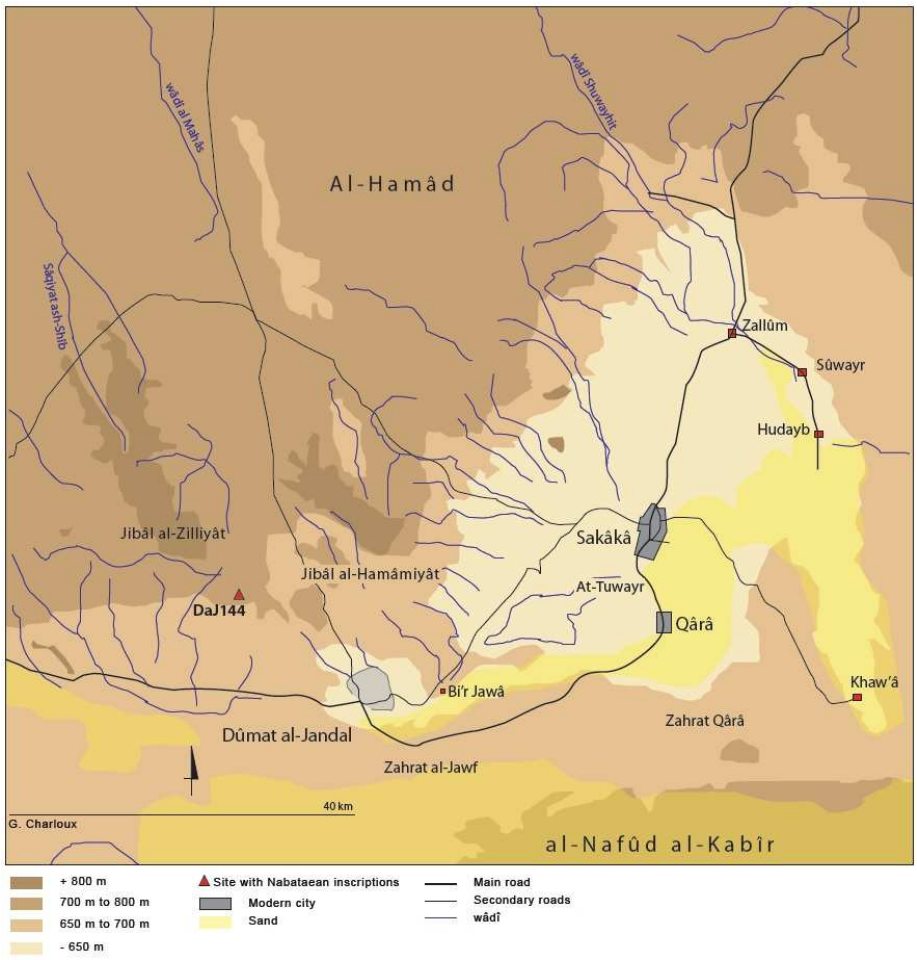

Figure 1: Map of the region of al-Jawf and Sakākā.

during the surveys has allowed for the identification of *c*. 106 inscriptions, sixty-eight of which seem to be so far unpublished. All but two of the remaining thirty-eight were previously recorded in Sulayman al-Theeb's monumental publication *Mudawwanat al-nuqūš al-nabaṭiyyah* in 2010. The last two were published by Khaleel al-Muaikel in 2002. Ninety-five inscriptions are written in the Nabataean script, ten are written in the Nabataeo-Arabic script (including two unpublished) and one, dated to the mid-sixth century AD, is written in what can safely be considered as pre-Islamic Arabic script. The mid-sixth century text is very important for the history of the region because it is the first clearly dated pre-Islamic Arabic text from north-west Arabia. The Nabataean inscriptions are also very interesting because two of them are dated to the beginning of the second century AD and mention Nabataean soldiers recruited in Roman military units. Considering the importance of these texts, it was decided, in agreement with the project's directors and the Saudi Commission for

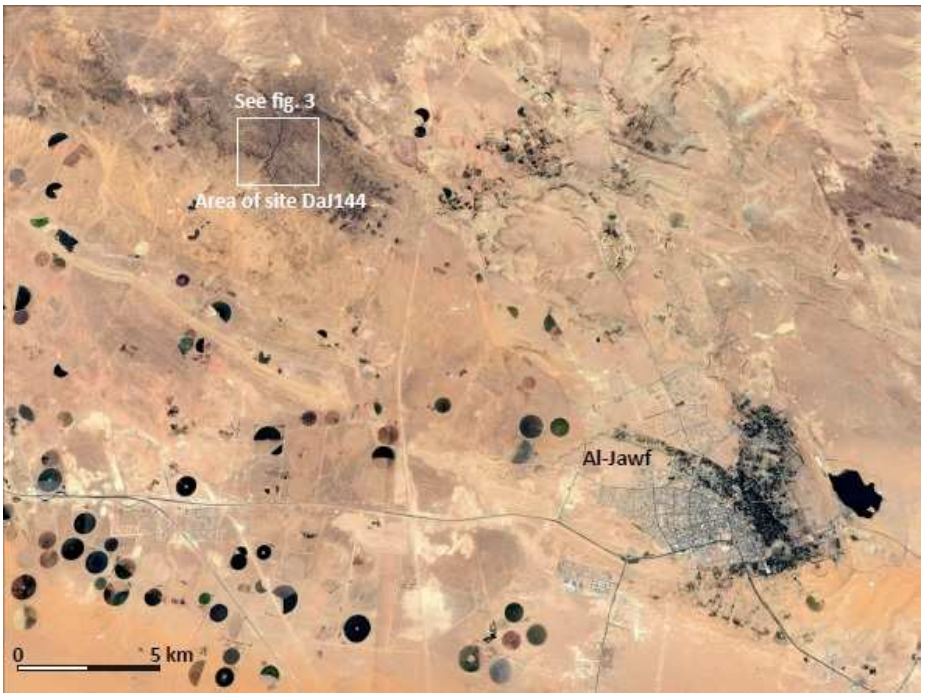

Figure 2: Google Earth Satellite image showing the location of site DaJ144.

Tourism and Heritage, to make them available to the scholarly community as quickly as possible.

All the texts come from site no. 144, numbered DaJ144, where DaJ stands for Dūmat al-Jandal. It is located 20 km north-west of al-Jawf, on the foothills of a long (13 km) rocky plateau known as aẓ-Ẓilliyyāṭ and either at the outlet of, or inside, a small wadi (figs 1–2, see also § 3.1 below). Among the other sites recorded in this area, only one yielded Nabataean inscriptions: DaJ7, known as ʿAbd al-Jawf, which contains two unpublished texts.[4] The plateau culminates at 833 m asl, and the inscriptions themselves are at about 750 m. Note for comparison that the altitude in the centre of al-Jawf is *c*. 600 m asl.

2 The inscriptions

The eighteen inscriptions photographed at site DaJ144 are published here for the first time. They belong to ten different epigraphic points which contain from one to five texts (figs 3–4). The inscriptions have been numbered according to the way the epigraphic material from the Arabian peninsula will be numbered: the Nabataean ones bear numbers DaJ144Nab1 to DaJ144Nab17 and the pre-Islamic Arabic inscription is numbered DaJ144PAr1.

[4]These will be published later.

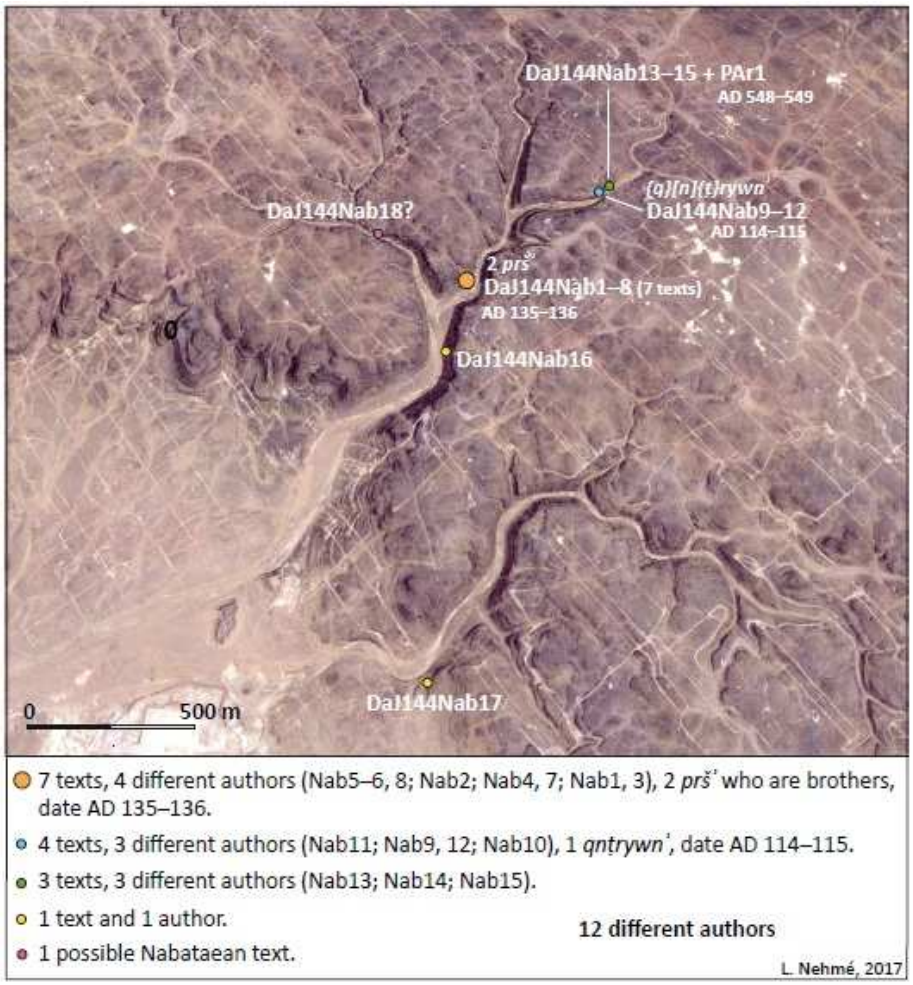
DaJ144Nab13–15 + PAr1
AD 548–549
{q}[n]{t}rywn
DaJ144Nab9–12
AD 114–115
DaJ144Nab18?
2 prš
DaJ144Nab1–8 (7 texts)
AD 135–136
DaJ144Nab16
DaJ144Nab17
0
500 m
7 texts, 4 different authors (Nab5–6, 8; Nab2; Nab4, 7; Nab1, 3), 2 prš' who are brothers, date AD 135–136.
4 texts, 3 different authors (Nab11; Nab9, 12; Nab10), 1 qnṭrywn', date AD 114–115.
3 texts, 3 different authors (Nab13; Nab14; Nab15).
1 text and 1 author.
1 possible Nabataean text.
12 different authors
L. Nehmé, 2017

Figure 3: Google Earth Satellite image showing the distribution of the inscriptions in the wadi. Only five points appear on the map because some epigraphic points are too close to each other to be shown at this scale.

2.1 DaJ144PAr1 (figs 5–7)

This is the most significant and most important text and the one which motivated the publication of this collection of texts. It is carved in the middle left part of a sandstone boulder, *c*. 1.10 m high and 0.70 m wide (fig. 5), while a Nabataean inscription, DaJ144Nab13, on which see below, is carved in its lower part. Six animal figures are drawn on the rock. These are, from top to bottom: three camels, probably female because they have their tail raised,[5] one ibex, one male camel and one other probably female camel. Two of the camels have a load on top of the hump: one is represented by a simple stroke

[5]As first recognised by A. Searight (Macdonald & Searight 1983: 575).

Figure 4: The western side of the wadi showing the kind of boulders which bear the inscriptions (G. Charloux).

which thickens slightly at its top and the other is probably a human stick figure (rather than a cross). If the interpretation is correct, the right arm is bent and the legs are not shown, as if the figure was standing on the hump rather than riding the camel. There are comparable representations elsewhere in Arabia and among the drawings of mounted camels which are associated with the Safaitic inscriptions.[6] Since the drawings occupy the greatest part of the surface of the rock and since the two inscriptions are written around them, it is possible that the carving sequence is the following: drawings, Nabataean inscription, pre-Islamic Arabic inscription. But it is equally possible that the drawings and the pre-Islamic Arabic inscription are contemporary, as indicated by the fact that the tools used to carve them produced the same kind of incision (same width, same depth, etc.).

The text (figs 6–7):

dkr
dkr ʾl-ʾlh
ḥgʿ{b/n}w br
šlmh[7]
{b}y{r}[ḥ] šnt 4×100
$+20+20+3$ *cross*

[6]Such as the one published in Nayeem (2000: fig. 191) (I thank Michael Macdonald for this reference).

[7]I have decided, conventionally, to keep *š* in the transliteration of all the Nabataean, Nabataeo-Arabic and pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions, whether *š* represents Arabic *š* or *s*.

Figure 5: The boulder which bears inscriptions DaJ144PAr1 and DaJ144Nab13 (G. Charloux).

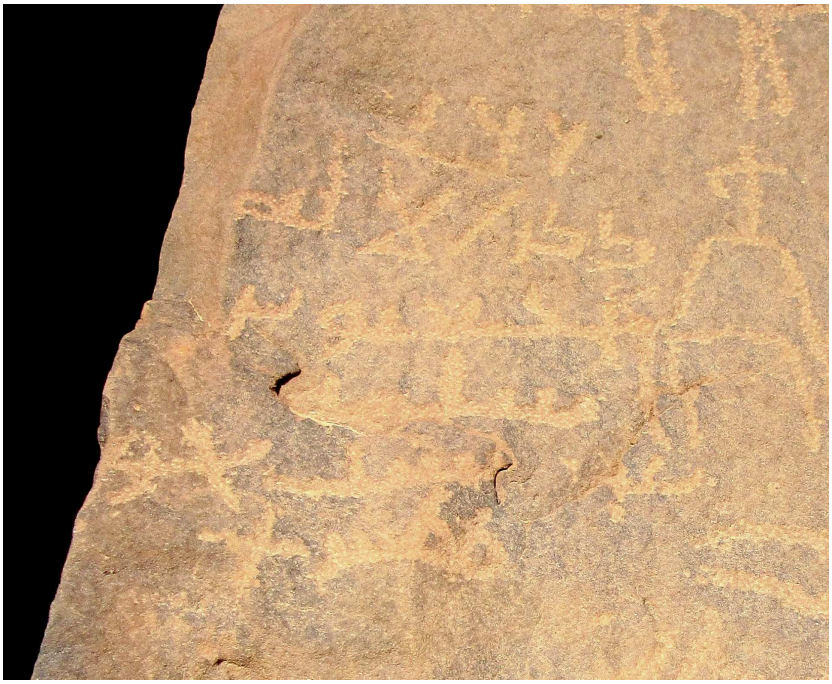

Figure 6: Close-up of DaJ144PAr1 (G. Charloux).

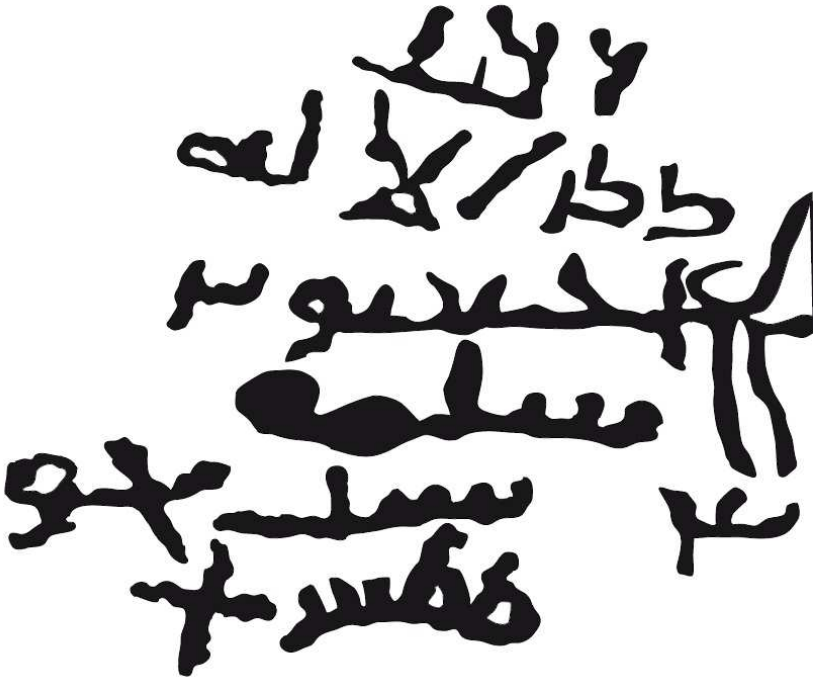

Figure 7: Facsimile of DaJ144PAr1 (L. Nehmé).

"May be remembered. May God remember Ḥgʿ{b/n}w son of Salama/Salāma/Salima {in} the m[onth] (gap) year 443 [AD 548/549]."

The text is clear, except for the possible confusion between the *b* and the *n* in the author's name and the doubtful presence of *byrḥ*, "in the month of", at the beginning of line 5. The patina of these three letters is identical to that of the other letters but it is surprising that the author wrote neither the final *ḥ* nor the month name. It is possible that the small cracks which affect the stone at this point just prevented him from writing the *ḥ*, which in turn discouraged him from writing the month name.

Except for the first line, the text is written in a script which is the ultimate stage of the development of Nabataean into Arabic and which can be considered as Arabic. It can be compared with the 5th and 6th century pre-Islamic inscriptions from the Arabian peninsula, particularly those discovered in the area of Ḥimà, north of Najrān, and published in Robin et al. (2014). Two of the latter are dated, one to AD 470 and one to AD 513. If one compares DaJ144PAr1 to the AD 513 one, Ḥimà-al-Musammāt PalAr 1 (fig. 8),[8] one can see that the letters and the numerals which appear in both texts have very similar shapes (*d*, *ḥ*, *w*, *l*, *n*, *š/s*, 4×100), except for the final *t* of *šnt* which in Dūmah is made of two rather than three strokes. Note that the letters *dkr*, at the beginning of line 2, if read correctly, are also different (see below). Finally, like the Ḥimà texts, none of the letters bears a diacritical dot.

The text shows a very interesting feature, which has never been found before, and that is the repetition, at the beginning of the text, of the word *dkr*, Arabic *ḏkr*. It is written once in Nabataeo-Arabic characters, line 1, and once in a script which would be at home in the first century Hijra at the beginning of line 2. The fact that *ḏkr* was repeated shows that the Nabataeo-Arabic formula was still present in the author's mind but that it was perhaps

Figure 8: Facsimile of Ḥimà-al-Musammāt PalAr 1 (L. Nehmé).

[8]Note that C. Robin uses "PalAr" to label inscriptions for which it is impossible to decide whether they still have an Aramaic content or whether they are Arabic in language. In our terminology, Pre-Islamic Arabic ("PAr") is used to label inscriptions which are written in the Arabic script in the pre-Islamic period.

considered as a logogram.[9] In this respect, it is worth noting that none of the dated pre-Islamic Arabic texts known so far, and none of the inscriptions written in the most developed version of the Nabataeo-Arabic script – the closest to pre-Islamic Arabic – contains the typical Nabataean formulas found in the graffiti, *šlm* + name(s) ± *bṭb*, *dkyr* + name(s) ± *bṭb*, and *dkyr w šlm* + name(s) ± *bṭb*. What we see, on the contrary, is the appearance of new formulas, based on the use of verbs in the 3rd person singular of the perfect with an optative force, such as *šmʿt* + the divine name al-ʿUzzā in UJadh 345, 364, and 313 (Nehmé 2013; 2017: 82–83). In DaJ144PAr1, *dkr* is also, most probably, Arabic *ḏakara* with an optative force. Arabic *samiʿat* and *ḏakara* in these texts are thus used with the divine names al-ʿUzzā and the god named *ʾl-ʾlh* (on which see below), who are asked to listen to and to remember the authors of the texts.[10] One finds an exact equivalent of this formula in the Zebed inscription of the martyrion of St Sergius, in northern Syria, dated AD 512, which starts with *[ḏ]{k}r ʾl-ʾlh* (Macdonald 2015: 410–411).[11]

With regard to the language of the text, there are both diagnostic and non-diagnostic words in it. If one agrees with the interpretation of *dkr* given above, this can only be Arabic because the Aramaic suffix conjugation does not have an optative force whereas the perfect in Arabic is constantly used in wishes, prayers and curses with an optative meaning (Wright 1896–1898: II, 2–3). Since these texts can be considered as prayers, the optative is more likely. The god's name, *ʾl-ʾlh*, has the definite article typical of Classical Arabic and most modern dialects. If *{b}y{r}[ḥ]* was indeed intended to be written by the author, it would be an Aramaic word, not an Arabic one,[12] and the same is true of *br*, which is systematically used for "son of" in the pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions (see Macdonald 2010: 20 n. 41). Both *yrḥ* and *br* are also attested in the pre-Islamic Arabic texts from Ḥimà and it is not surprising to find them used here. As for *šnt*, it can be both Aramaic and Arabic.

This mixture of Arabic and Aramaic is a typical feature of both the Nabataeo-Arabic and the pre-Islamic Arabic texts from the Arabian Peninsula. I have suggested elsewhere (Nehmé 2017: 86), however, that in most cases, the Aramaic words appear in the formulaic parts of the texts, which are conservative, and particularly in the dating formula. They are therefore not indicative of the language spoken by the authors of the text. On the contrary, the use of *ḏakara* with an optative force shows that the author of DaJ144PAr1 was very likely an Arabic-speaking individual.

The reading of the date is clear. It is written in the way that one would expect, i.e. 4×100 followed by $20 + 20 + 3$. That is year 443 of what can only be the era of the Roman province of Arabia, the only one which was in use in

[9] For this to be true, however, we would need to have *dkyr* in line 1, not *dkr*. It is just possible that the short and thin vertical line between the *k* and the *r* represents a badly formed *y*. Whatever the explanation, the author wrote this word twice, in two different scripts.

[10] Both of these usages are found in Hismaic. See references for SMʿ in Nehmé (2017: 83).

[11] The reading of *[ḏ]{k}r* in this text is of course uncertain.

[12] Or, as suggested to me by R. Hoyland (pers. comm.), an Arabic word of Aramaic origin, i.e. in this pre-Islamic dialect of Arabic it could have become a naturalised word.

this region at this period. Considering that the month is not given, the text is dated to AD 548/549.

What follows "3" in line 6 is not another numeral. Indeed, were it a numeral, it could only be a "4". However, it does not look like the "4" which multiplies the "100" immediately above (it has a + shape rather than an X shape) and, more significantly, it would not be in the right place. Numerals are multiplied when going from the smaller to the bigger numeral (hence 4×100) and added when going from the bigger to the smaller (hence $20 + 20 + 3$). Another "4" after "3" would therefore not make sense. This + sign is also not likely to be identical to the X sign which is written before the beginning of some of the Nabataean inscriptions of the same group (DaJ144Nab9 and 12). It is thus most likely that what follows the numerals is a cross, like the ones which are associated with the inscriptions of the Ḥimà region, especially those described as type 2, made of two simple segments which cross each other at right angles (Robin et al. 2014: 1054). This would indicate that the author is a Christian.

The inscription contains two personal names, *ḥgʿ{b/n}w* and *šlmh*. The reading of the first one is certain[13] but no parallels could be found for it either in Nabataean or in Arabic. It may be a name composed of *ḥg* (Arabic Ḥājj?) and either *ʿ{b}* or *ʿ{n}*, i.e. Arabic ʿB, ĠB, ʿN or ĠN. Ancient North Arabian provides many examples of both the words *ḥg* and *ḥgg* and theophoric names built with *ḥg*, such as *ḥgʾl* (C 553, Safaitic), *ḥgbrʾt* (KRS 2244, Safaitic), *ḥglh* (BTH 213, Safaitic) and *ḥglt* (BR 6, 7, 35, SIJ 54, etc., Safaitic and Hismaic),[14] and it is possible that we have here the same kind of compound name, although ʿB / ʿN / ĠB / ĠN would still have to be explained. To my knowledge, there is no theophoric name built with either of these sequences of letters in the Nabataean and Nabataeo-Arabic corpus. One should note the presence of wawation at the end of *ḥgʿ{b/n}w*. As for *šlmh*, it may be the equivalent of Arabic Salama, Salāma or Salima, this order reflecting the decreasing popularity of the name in Ibn al-Kalbī's geneaologies. I know of two instances of *šlmt* in Nabataean, with a *t*, one in ThMNN 39 (JSNab 77) and one in ThMNN 871.[15] If *šlmh* and *šlmt* are indeed the same name, it means that it was initially pronounced with a *t* at the end, and that in the 6th century, this phoneme had changed to final *h*.[16]

Finally, one needs to comment on the divine name *ʾl-ʾlh*, which occurs here for the first time in north-west Arabia. It occurs, also in a Christian context, in Ḥimà-Sud PalAr 8 (Robin et al. 2014: 1099–1102, see the commentary on *ʾl-ʾlh* p. 1102), north of Najrān and it is the name of the Christian God in the Zebed inscription. It is the normal Christian pre-Islamic Arabic name for God. I formerly thought, in the edition of the Nabataeo-Arabic inscription DaJ000NabAr1 (Nehmé 2016), that *ʾl-ʾlh* was used in the theophoric name

[13] Note that what comes before the *ḥ* is the tail of the mounted camel.

[14] For all these examples, see the indexes in OCIANA.

[15] Note that *šlmt* is not attested in JSNab 102, which does not read *šlmt br rbʾl* but *šlm rbybʾl*. ThMNN's index should therefore be corrected.

[16] This sound change apparently took place quite early in Nabataean, as can be seen from the Greek transcriptions (Al-Jallad 2017: 157–158).

Figure 9: Nabataeo-Arabic inscription DaJ000NabAr1 (G. Charloux).

brʾlʾlh, a compound made of *br* + *ʾl-ʾlh*, but a closer examination of the stone (fig. 9) shows that it is also possible, and probably better, to read *[d]kr ʾl-ʾlh*, i.e. the same formula as the one in Zebed and in DaJ144PAr1. The stone is broken on the right, and one can just see, to the right of the *k*, the bottom part of the missing *d*. There is however a theophoric name built with *ʾl-ʾlh*, and that is *ʿbdʾlʾlh* in LPArab 1. Indeed, in the first line of this inscription (fig. 10),[17] I suggest to read *ʾnh ʿbdʾlʾlh* instead of *ʾllh ʿfrʾ lʾlyh* ("God, [grant] pardon to ʾUllaih") of the *editio princeps*, which was followed by various other unsatisfactory readings. Lastly, *ʾl-ʾlh* is the name of God in the foundation inscription, in Arabic, of the monastery of Hind in al-Ḥīra, in *c.* AD 560 (on this inscription, Hind and the date, see Robin 2013: 239 and § 3.4.2 below), as it is preserved in two transcriptions of al-Bakrī and Yāqūt.

Note: the Nabataean inscription on the same boulder as DaJ144PAr1 is DaJ144Nab13, for which see below.

[17] I am grateful to Ali Manaser who provided a new photograph of the inscription, now kept in the Mafraq museum in Jordan.

Figure 10: First line of LPArab 1. Photo courtesy of A. Manaser.

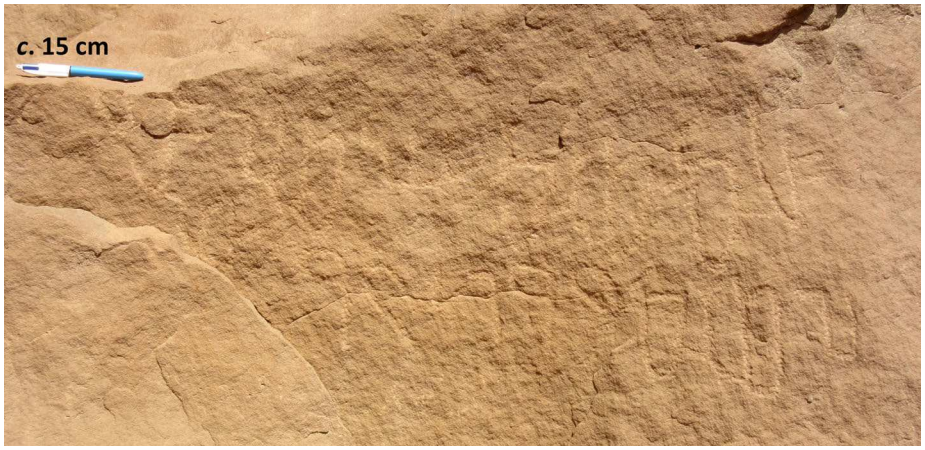

Figure 11: Nabataean inscription DaJ144Nab1 (G. Charloux).

2.2 DaJ144Nab1 (fig. 11)

This text is carved on one of the boulders which are visible on fig. 4, along with DaJ144Nab2–8. The reading is clear, except for the last part of line 2, which seems to have been incised by another hand. Indeed, up to *tymw*, the letters are carved carefully, with a pointed tool which gives the lines a slightly hammered aspect, whereas what follows is less deeply and less carefully engraved. It is therefore possible that someone else added his name at the end. This would also explain the form of the *y*, which is different from the two other *y*s in the text. The first two letters of the last name are uncertain and I cannot offer a better suggestion for the reading.

šlm tymʿbdt prš{ʾ}
br tymw {w} {p}[ṣ]{y}w

"May Taymʿobodat, {the} cavalryman, son of Taymū, be safe, {and} P[ṣ]yw."

The same man wrote DaJ144Nab3 in the same area. The three personal names are widespread in the Nabataean onomasticon and do not require any comment. On *prš*ʾ, see the general commentary, § 3.3.

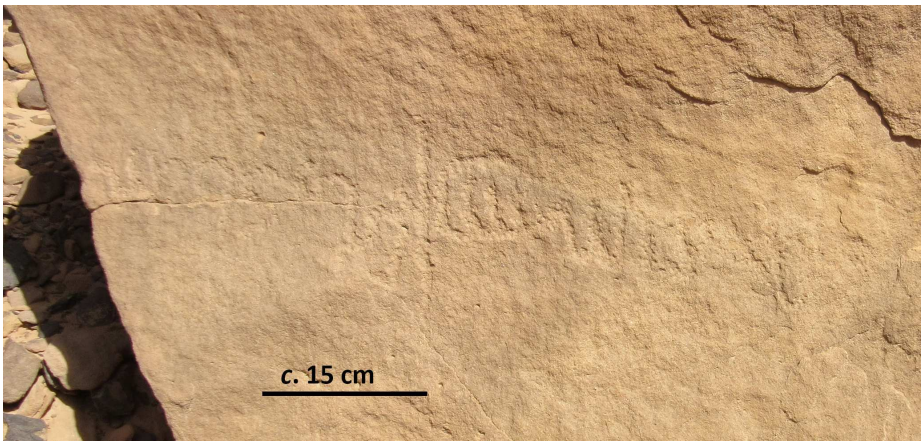

Figure 12: Nabataean inscription DaJ144Nab2 (G. Charloux).

2.3 DaJ144Nab2 (fig. 12)

This text is also written on one of the boulders visible on fig. 4.

{mgyn}t br ʿbdʾlhy ----{b/ṣ}y{d/r}

"{Mgyn}t son of ʿAbdʾallāhī ----{b/ṣ}y{d/r}."

The first name is difficult to read and the suggested reading is the best one I could provide. {Mgyn}t is not attested in Nabataean or Arabic but since all the letters except the last one are uncertain, there is no point in trying to offer an etymology for it. Note the form of the letters *bdʾ* in *ʿbdʾlhy*, which are more or less written as parallel lines, except for the *ʾ* which has an oblique line protruding to the right at its end. This sequence can be compared with the same sequence in the name *ʿbdʾlgʾ* in two inscriptions from Umm Jadhāyidh, ThMNN 587 (UJadh 129) and ThMNN 560 (UJadh 202). The combination of letters *b-d-ʾ* had apparently become some sort of formalized way of writing these letters. A few letters are carved after *ʿbdʾlhy* but I cannot make any sense of them; perhaps it is another name.

2.4 DaJ144Nab3 (fig. 13)

DaJ144Nab3 to 7 (four texts) are carved on the same boulder in the same area as DaJ144Nab1–2. The first one, on top of the rock face, is the most finely carved and occupies a prominent position. Two animal figures are also crudely drawn on the stone. They may represent a horse mounted by a man holding a spear and possibly a small shield, hunting an ostrich.

šlm tymʿbdt br tymw

The same man wrote DaJ144Nab1 in the same area and since he is said in this text to be a *pršʾ*, *tymʿbdt* of DaJ144Nab3 was a *pršʾ* too. The handwriting of both texts is identical.

Figure 13: Nabataean inscriptions DaJ144Nab3–7 (G. Charloux).

2.5 DaJ144Nab4 (fig. 13)

šlm ʿbdt br ʿbdʾlhy br tymw w {d/r}ʿytw

"May ʿObodat son of ʿAbdʾallāhī son of Taymū be safe, and {D/R}ʿytw."

The text is much less carefully written than the previous one. The last name is not previously attested in Nabataean and may correspond to Arabic Dāʿiya. The same man wrote DaJ144Nab7 on the same stone, and the handwriting is similar in both texts, particularly visible in the way the first name is written.

2.6 DaJ144Nab5 + DaJ144Nab6 (fig. 13)

šlm gršʿw [br] tymʿbdt pršʾ šlm

"May Gršʿw [son of] Taymʿobodat the cavalryman be safe."

This graffito was initially considered as two separate texts, but if one examines DaJ144Nab8, where all the names are repeated, it appears likely that *br* should be restored between *gršʿw* and *tymʿbdt*. The first name is not previously attested in Nabataean and I have found no Arabic equivalent. According to J. Norris, to whom I am very grateful for the references which follow, the name Gršʿ appears several times in the so-called "Hismaeo-Safaitic" texts from

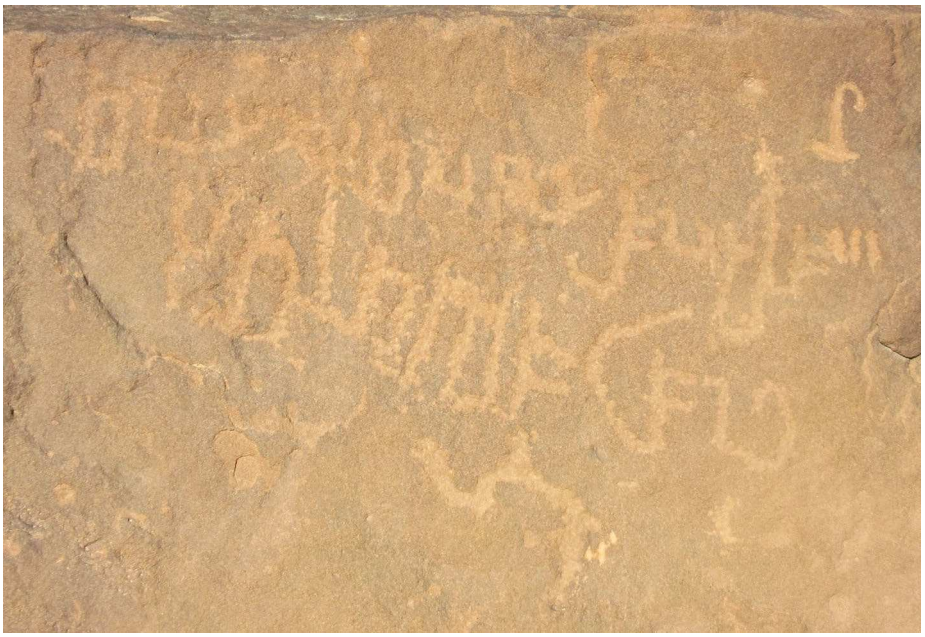

Figure 14: Nabataean inscription DaJ144Nab8 (G. Charloux).

the Dūmah area, in the form *grs²ᶜ*,[18] as well as in Hismaic and Safaitic (see OCIANA). It probably derives from Arabic *gršᶜ*, which means "who has a large chest (of a camel), large (of a wadi)" (Lisān, s.v. *gršᶜ*.). On *pršᵓ*, see the general commentary, § 3.3. Since *tymᶜbdt* is said to be a cavalryman in DaJ144Nab1, it is tempting to consider that *pršᵓ* in the present text also refers to *tymᶜbdt*, but it is more likely that the profession refers to the author of the text and that the *pršᵓ* is GršᶜwW.

2.7 DaJ144Nab7 (fig. 13)

šlm ᶜbdt br ᶜbd[ᵓl]hy

This text was probably written by the same man as DaJ144Nab4, but this time he gives only his father's name. The end of the text has been damaged by the drawing of an ostrich.

2.8 DaJ144Nab8 (fig. 14)

šlm gršᶜw br tymᶜbdt
pršᵓ šnt tltyn

"May Gršᶜw son of Taymᶜobodat the cavalryman be safe, year thirty."

[18]Five unpublished texts and five previously published texts (ThNQT 116, 128, 129, ThNTS 86, 108). The Hismaeo-Safaitic script category is currently being discussed between the experts on Ancient North Arabian scripts and its existence is still debated.

Figure 15: Nabataean inscription DaJ144Nab9 (G. Charloux).

This graffito is identical to DaJ144Nab5 + 6, with the exception of the date, which is not given in the latter. *šnt tltyn* most probably corresponds to year 30 of the era of the Roman province of Arabia, i.e. AD 135/136. On *prš*ˀ, see the general commentary, § 3.3.

2.9 DaJ144Nab9 (fig. 15)

DaJ144Nab9 and 10 are on the same stone.

dkyr ʿ*bd*ˀ*lhy br tymw {šnt t}š*ʿ *X*

"May ʿAbdˀallāhī son of Taymū be remembered, {year ni}ne X."

*šnt tš*ʿ corresponds to AD 114/115. The reading of the date is almost certain despite the fact that this part of the text has been damaged by the drawing of an ibex over it. A few letters and another X sign are carved under the beginning of the line but no sense could be made of them: *{d/r}{b/w/p}X br {ṭ}*..?. Another *dkyr* is not very likely.

In the present graffito, an X is written after the date but it is very unlikely that it is a numeral. X signs written at the beginning or at the end of texts occur elsewhere in the Nabataean inscriptions. One finds an X, for example, carved at the end of ThMNN 752 and ThNS 19 or before the beginning of four texts of the Darb al-Bakrah corpus, all unpublished. Three of the latter are carved on the same rock face and it seems that the X was added later, as if it was intended to mark the texts for a reason which remains unknown.

2.10 DaJ144Nab10 (fig. 16–17)

dkyr ʿ*zyzw {q}[n]{ṭ}rywn*ˀ
br ʿ*{w}yd{w} bṭb*

"May ʿAzīzū the {c}[en]{t}urion son of ʿU{w}ayd{ū} be remembered in well-being."

Figure 16: Nabataean inscription DaJ144Nab10 (C. Poliakoff).

Figure 17: Close-up on the end of Nabataean inscription DaJ144Nab10 (G. Charloux).

Both names are well known in the Nabataean onomasticon. The author is a centurion, a military rank which is relatively common in the Nabataean inscriptions of north-west Arabia, for which see the general commentary, § 3.2.

2.11 DaJ144Nab11 (fig. 18)

DaJ144Nab11 and 12 are carved on the same stone.

dkyr {m}ʿ{d/r}w br
šmylw

The reading of the first *m* is not certain because the right part of the letter is very faint, but there is enough space for an *m* and both *mʿdw* and *mʿrw* are

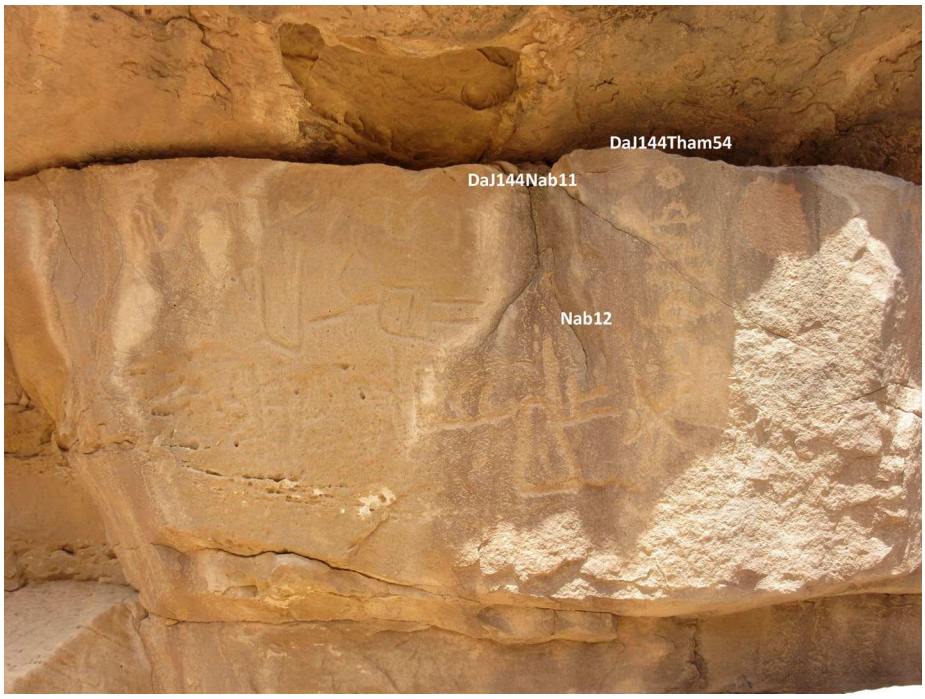

Figure 18: Nabataean inscriptions DaJ144Nab11–12 (G. Charloux).

possible names in Nabataean, attested in several inscriptions. The first one may correspond to Arabic Maʿadd, Maʿd or Muʿāḍ and the second was derived by E. Littmann (1914: no. 22) from Arabic *maghar*, which refers to a reddish colour.[19] The name *šmylw* is not previously attested in Nabataean and no exact equivalent was found in Arabic, where only one Šumayla (which would normally be written *šmylt* in Nabataean) is known in Ibn al-Kalbī's genealogies.

2.12 DaJ144Nab12 (fig. 18)

X šlm ʿ{bdʾ}lhy br tym[w]

It is possible that DaJ144Nab9 and 12 were written by the same person.

Compare the way the sequence of letters *bdʾ* is written in this text with the way it is written in DaJ144Nab2, 4 and 9: the *d* and the *ʾ* are joined, which is unusual in Nabataean, and the *b* and the *d* have almost identical shapes (see under DaJ144Nab2). The same X sign as the one mentioned under DaJ144Nab9 is carved before *šlm*.

A Thamudic C text, DaJ144ANA54, is carved vertically to the right of the two Nabataean ones. It reads *wdd f d{ʿ}*, "Greeting be with D{ʿ}", an expression which is common in the Thamudic C graffiti.[20] Note that if the sign for the *ʿ*

[19] See also Al-Theeb (2010: 262–263). No other attestation of the name was found.

[20] The translation is the one suggested in Al-Jallad (2016 [in preparation]). See also the discussion of *wdd* in Stokes (2016: 37–38)

Figure 19: Nabataean inscription DaJ144Nab13 (G. Charloux).

is not closed, it may also be a *b*, but it is less likely. Dʿ is attested in Safaitic and Hismaic (SIJ 402, Jacobson B 2.1 and TLWS 25, see references and sigla in OCIANA s.v.). Dozens of 'Thamudic' graffiti were recorded at site DaJ144. These will be published by Jérôme Norris and only the ones which appear on the same blocks as the Nabataean inscriptions are mentioned here.

2.13 DaJ144Nab13 (fig. 19)

On the same stone as DaJ144PAr1.

tymw br
zbdw šlm

The second name can be read *zbdw* only if one takes the sign between the *d* and the *w*, which resembles a Greek phi, as not belonging to the text, which is possible since it continues below the line. *zbdw* is a well-known Nabataean name in north-west Arabia.

2.14 DaJ144Nab14 (fig. 20)

DaJ144Nab14 and 15 are on the same stone.

mškw br ʿbdʾlgʾ šlm

Figure 20: Nabataean inscriptions DaJ144Nab14–15 (G. Charloux).

Figure 21: Nabataean inscription DaJ144Nab16 (G. Charloux).

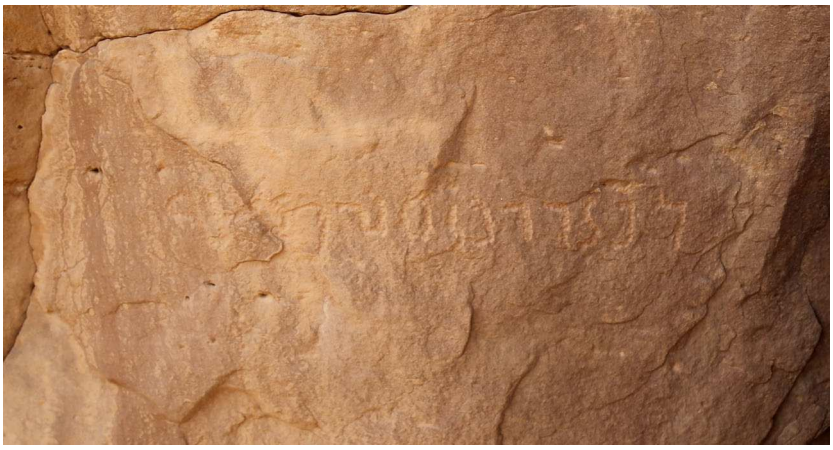

Figure 22: Nabataean inscription DaJ144Nab17 (C. Poliakoff).

This text is finely carved and very clear. Both names are well-known in the Nabataean onomasticon (cf. Arabic Māsik, while ʿAbdʾalgā, "the servant of [the god of] ʾl-gʾ" is a typically Nabataean name).

2.15 DaJ144Nab15 (fig. 20)

dkyr ʿlw{p} br š

The text is unfinished. The first three letters of the name are certain and the last one is tentatively read as a final *p*. The possible alternatives, although less probable, are a final *y* (but it would in the wrong direction) or a *w* (but the loop would probably be closed). The name *ʿlwp* is not attested before in Nabataean but a name ʿIlāf is attested once in Ibn al-Kalbī's genealogies.[21]

2.16 DaJ144Nab16 (fig. 21)

dkyr k{h}ylw br tymʿbdt šlm

The second letter of the first name is uncertain because it looks either like a final *h* or possibly like a *m* (but *kmylw* does not exist in Nabataean whereas *khylw* is a common name). It is probable that the author made a mistake and used the final rather than the medial form of the *h*. There are comparable examples in JSNab 2 (in the name *šhm* line 3), JSNab 12 (in *grhm* line 6 and in *ḥlpʾlhy* line 12) and in a text from Wadi Maghārah (in the name *hʿly*) (Negev 1967: 251–252, fig. 3 and pl. 48B).

There is an Ancient North Arabian inscription below the Nabataean one, DaJ144ANA29. It reads *l tʾl bn brd*. The first name is well known in Safaitic (and occurs once in Hismaic, cf. OCIANA, s.v.) and the second is well known both in Safaitic and Hismaic. The text is probably Hismaic because of the dot for *n* and because the *r* is smaller and more rounded than the *b*. It has recently been suggested, however, that because of the form of the *l auctoris*, which is not hooked (but the *l* in *tʾl* is), this text may have to be considered as a Hismaeo-Safaitic text.[22]

2.17 DaJ144Nab17 (fig. 22)

dkyr rk{ym} br ----w

The name is not previously attested in Nabataean. Despite the presence of a possible small tail on top of the last letter, I do not think this is an ʾ.

[21] Nabataean *w* can be used to represent Arabic *ā* (Cantineau 1930–1932: I, p. 48), as in *ʿdnwn*, which is probably the equivalent of Arabic ʿAdnān. There is one example in JSNab 328 and many others (most unpublished) in the Darb al-Bakrah corpus, both of *ʿdnwn* and of compound names built with *ʿdnwn* such as *ʿbdʿdnwn* in ThNUJ 157 and 209, and *zbdʿdnwn* in ThNUJ 13 (reread), etc.

[22] J. Norris, pers. comm. at the Seminar for Arabian Studies, 2017.

3 Additional commentaries

3.1 The location of the texts

As I already said in the introduction, the collection of inscriptions published in this article is carved in the first series of rocky outcrops one encounters when leaving Dūmat al-Jandal towards the north-west. Since the ancient city itself is located north of the main wadi bed, it is likely that people who travelled out of Dūmah going north-west, in the direction of Wadi Sirḥān, did not follow this wadi bed, because this would have required a useless detour of several kilometers to the south, but probably went north-west immediately. This would have brought them, in three hours, to the vicinity of these outcrops. It should be noted, however, as can be seen on figure 3, that the texts are not located on the external foothills of the latter but are all, except for DaJ144Nab17, carved on the banks of the only wadi which crosses the outcrop from north-east to south-west. It is therefore very likely that the eleven individuals who wrote these texts, especially the three among them who were military men, were on some sort of official or unofficial reconnaissance patrol and stopped on the way to carve their signatures. The other possibility is that they were, for whatever reason, crossing the outcrops to reach their northern side, but it is less likely because there is nothing, on that side that would justify this crossing. Whatever the case, the authors of these texts were not far from the ancient caravan road which joined Dūmat al-Jandal with Syria through Wadi Sirḥān (see most recently Loreto 2016: 309–312). They were either travelling along it or keeping this part of it, close to Dūmah, under surveillance from the top of the plateau which may have served as a watch post. They may also simply have been garrisoned in Dūmah and gone there on a patrol.

3.2 The centurion

One text, DaJ144Nab10, mentions a centurion. The word is written in Nabataean, *{q}[n]{ṭ}rywnʾ*, and despite the uncertain reading of the first three letters, the restitution is almost assured because most of the letters are visible (see fig. 17). The word centurion written in Nabataean letters occurs in three other inscriptions, which are mentioned in an article published ten years ago (Nehmé 2005–2006: 185–186).[23] It is written once *qnṭrywnʾ*, once *qnṭrynʾ* and once *qnṭrwnʾ*. DaJ144Nab10 is thus the second attestation of the orthography *qnṭrywnʾ*. Since DaJ144Nab9 (dated to AD 114/115) and DaJ144Nab10 are carved on the same stone, it is likely (but it is unfortunately impossible to be sure) that both texts were written at about the same date. If this is the case, DaJ144Nab10 would be the first evidence of a centurion bearing a Nabataean name, ʿAzīzū, recruited in an early Roman provincial military unit.[24] Since he

[23]The inscriptions are JSNab 31, UJadh 6 = ThNUJ 90 and inscription no. 8 in Nehmé (2005–2006), which will ultimately be numbered MS111Nab1.

[24]The only other dated Nabataean text mentioning a centurion is JSNab 31, which is dated to the reign of Aretas IV.

does not mention his Roman citizenship, it is likely that he was a *peregrinus* and was an infantryman possibly commanding part of an auxiliary cohort, a *centuria* (or a detachment), who came to this place in AD 114/115, i.e. less than ten years after the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom.[25] He cannot have commanded an auxiliary cavalry unit (an *ala*) because the latter would have been commanded by a prefect, nor part of a cavalry unit, a *turma*, because the latter would have been commanded by a decurion. Of course, this remains speculation because there is no way we can be sure that DaJ144Nab10 is dated to AD 114/115. If it is not, there is also no particular reason to consider that it is contemporary with the other dated inscriptions.

3.3 The *pršyʾ*, the "cavalrymen"

Three inscriptions contain the word *pršʾ* "cavalryman", a well-known Nabataean military function (for which see Graf 1988: 201 and Starcky 1971: 159) attested in Petra, Sarmadāʾ, as-Sīj, al-ʿUdhayb and several places in the region of al-Jawf (see the table below). The three inscriptions are DaJ144Nab1, Nab5 + 6, and Nab8. They were written by only two individuals since DaJ144 Nab5 + 6 and DaJ144Nab8 are written by the same person, *gršʿw* son of *tymw*. Note also that although the author of DaJ144Nab3 does not say that he is a *pršʾ*, he probably was one because he bears the same name, *tymʿbdt* son of *tymw*, as the author of DaJ144Nab1, who says he is a *pršʾ*. Both names are very common in the Nabataean onomasticon and it may be a coincidence, but it is not likely because the handwriting of the two inscriptions is very similar. Finally, it is also likely that the two *pršyʾ*, *tymʿbdt* and *gršʿw*, were brothers, because they have the same father's name.

DaJ144Nab8 is dated to AD 135/136, i.e. 21 years later than the text which mentions the centurion, DaJ144Nab10. The centurion and the *pršyʾ* were therefore not there at the same time. As pointed out to me by P.-L. Gatier, it is however possible that both were part of a *cohors equitata* which consisted of *turmae* commanded by decurions and of *centuriae* commanded by centurions.[26] The wadi would then have been visited once by infantrymen and once by cavalrymen, belonging or not to the same regiment. It is also possible that the centurion and the *pršyʾ* were not part of the same kind of unit and that the *pršyʾ* were part of an *ala*, a cavalry unit.

It is worth recalling here that a group of twelve Greek inscriptions carved in Qubūr al-Jundī, 7 km south-west of Hegra, mention both horse (ἱππεύς) and camel (δρομεδάρις) riders.[27] One of them, Seyrig no. 5, says that one of the camel riders was a member of the *turma* Marini (Graf 1988: no. 6, pp. 194–195,

[25] I am very grateful to Pierre-Louis Gatier, who helped me determine what the function of this particular centurion could be and was very patient with me in correcting various versions of this paragraph.

[26] On the *cohortes equitatae* in Arabia, see Speidel (1977: 709–710).

[27] For the interpretation of these texts, see now Gatier (2017: 268–269). They were previously published in Seyrig (1941), Sartre (1982), and Graf (1988).

pl. 11).[28] In the same area, two Nabataean inscriptions, JSNab 227 and 245–246, mention one cavalryman and a group of cavalrymen respectively.[29] It is possible that all the individuals mentioned in these texts were members of the *ala I Ulpia droma(dariorum) Palmyr(enorum) (milliaria)*, which was stationed in the Ḥijāz in the first part of the second century AD and which may have included horse and camel riders.[30]

The new texts from the region of Dūmat al-Jandal are interesting because they show that people who bore Nabataean names and who identified themselves as cavalrymen served in the Roman army around AD 135/136, at the same time as we assume they did in the area of ancient Hegra on the basis of the neighbouring Greek inscriptions. It is of course well known that Nabataean soldiers were incorporated in the Roman army by Trajan soon after the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom.[31] What is new is the fact that these soldiers, when they talk of themselves, use the same terms, *pršʾ* and *qnṭrywnʾ* (if DaJ144Nab10 is indeed dated to AD 114–115) as the ones which were used by the Nabataeans before the annexation. It is noteworthy that in both sites, the riders are not mentioned *in* the city but on its outskirts. The troops they were part of were possibly stationed outside the oases of Hegra and Dūmah, on the main routes leading to them.

Table 1: The distribution of the word pršʾ *in the inscriptions*

No.	Site name	Inscription number	Remarks
1	Petra	MP 58 (doubtful, see Nehmé 2012)	*rb [prš/mšr]y[ʾ/tʾ]*, dated either *c*. 67 BC or *c*. AD 8 (year 16 or 17 of a king Aretas).
2		MP 664 (= Starcky 1971)	*rb pršyʾ*, dated either 67 BC or AD 8/9 (year 16 of a king Aretas).
		Possibly MP 85, but very uncertain (see Nehmé 2015: n. 14)	

[28] I also photographed this text, the reading of which is certain. Note that in this text, *turma* is spelled *torma*, which is unusual and is found again in the graffito from Bāyir published by P.-L. Gatier (2017).

[29] JSNab 245–246 was written by a man named ʾAftaḥ who mentions his companions the cavalrymen in charge of the guard: *ʾptḥ br rmʾl šlm pḥbrwhy* (or *{w}ḥbrwhy*) *pršyʾ nṭryn*, "ʾAftaḥ son of Ramʾel, may he be safe, and his companions the cavalrymen in charge of the guard".

[30] As is now proven by the three military diplomas dated to AD 126, 142 and 145, where it is mentioned, see the references in Gatier (2017: n. 65). On the fact that δρομεδάριος may apply to the soldiers of the unit whatever their mount, ibidem: 263.

[31] Bowersock (1983: 157), Sartre (2001: 612), and references there: the *Cohortes Ulpia Petraeorum* are the most famous.

3	Al-ʿUdhayb (Maqʿad al-Jundī)	JSNab 227	*ʿṣm prš*ʾ (the same man as ThNIS 1)
4		JSNab 245–246	*pršy*ʾ
5	As-Sīj	ThNIS 1	*ʿṣm prš*ʾ (the same man as JSNab 227)
6		ThNIS 2	*hrs prš*ʾ
7		ThNIS 3	*ḥnynw prš*ʾ
8		ThNIS 4	*ṣhlw prš*ʾ
9		ThNIS 13	*mṭ{y/n}w prš*ʾ (read *mṭrw* in ThNIS 13 but not likely)
10		ThNIS 21	*glqyn prš*ʾ
11	Sarmadāʾ (between al-ʿUlā and Taymāʾ)	ThNS 7	*rbybʾl prš*ʾ *w hprk*ʾ (rather than *dwynʾl* of ThNS). Note that he is the son of Damasippos.
12	Al-Jawf, DaJ144	DaJ144Nab1	*gršʿw prš*ʾ
13		DaJ144Nab5 + 6	*tymʿbdt prš*ʾ
14		DaJ144Nab8	*gršʿw prš*ʾ, dated AD 135/136
15	Al-Jawf, Qārat al-Mazād (DaJ156)	ThMNN 751 checked on a photograph	*ʾltw prš*ʾ
16		ThMNN 752 checked on a photograph	*mntny* (rather than *mntnw* of ThMNN 752) *hprk*ʾ *w prš*ʾ
17		ThMNN 753 checked on a photograph	*ʾšdw* (son of *mntny* of ThMNN 752), *ʾwšʾlhy* and one other, all *bny prš{y}*ʾ
18		ThMNN 754 checked on a photograph	*zydw prš*ʾ
19		ThMNN 761 checked on a photograph	*ʿbdʾlhy prš*ʾ
20		ThMNN 763 checked on a photograph	*tymʾlhy prš*ʾ
21		ThMNN 764 checked on a photograph	probably *[ʿbd]ʿbdt prš*ʾ

22		ThMNN 767 copy only	probably *mytnw pr[šʾ]*
23		ThMNN 768 copy only	*mškw pršʾ*
24		ThMNN 769 copy only	*ʿ---- pršʾ*
25	Al-Jawf, Jabal an-Nīṣa (DaJ011)	ThMNN 790 copy only	*ʿbdʾlhy pršʾ*
26		ThMNN 791 checked on a photograph	*ʿb{d}ʾl{hy} prš[..]y* (reading uncertain), dated to year 18 (and not 13) of Rabbel II (AD 88/89).
27	Al-Jawf, Qiyāl (DaJ029)	ThMNN 803	*zydw p[ršʾ]*

This table requires a few comments. It contains twenty-seven attestations of *pršʾ/pršyʾ*, including three uncertain ones, which come from eight different sites. All are located in north-west Arabia, except Petra, where we have at least one – and possibly two – mention(s) of *rb pršyʾ*, a chief cavalryman who was probably of a higher rank than a simple *pršʾ*. More than half of the texts come from the area of al-Jawf (fig. 23), but there is no reason to consider this as particularly significant. What is worth noting is the fact that most of the cavalrymen who are mentioned in the inscriptions appear in groups. This shows that they were probably members of cavalry squadrons which went around together and wrote their name and profession in the same places and sometimes on the same rock faces. This is the case in the site DaJ144 and this is also the case in as-Sīj and in Qārat al-Mazād where several *pršyʾ* carved their inscriptions in the same place.

Four inscriptions which contain the word *pršʾ* are dated: three (no. 26: ThMNN 791, no. 1: MP 58 and no. 2: MP 664) to a time when the Nabataean kingdom was independent, and one (no. 14: DaJ144Nab8) to AD 135/136, thus post-annexation. It is therefore now certain that the word *pršʾ* was used during both the Nabataean and the Roman periods, and this information is important in itself because it shows the continuity of the use of this Nabataean term in the Roman period.

It is also noteworthy that the author of ThNS 7 (as reread by the author) is called Rabībʾel son of Damasippos, who is also the author of ARNA.Nab 3, and it seems to me that both inscriptions are in similar handwritings. Rabībʾel is usually considered to be the same man as the author of JSNab 43, despite the fact that in the latter Rabībʾel does not give his father's name. Rabībʾel son of Damasippos was a member of a very well-known family who played a significant part in the administration of ancient Hegra and ancient Dūmah and who was involved in the so-called revolt of Damasī, about which much still needs to be written (see Al-Otaibi 2011: 89–91, with previous bibliography and

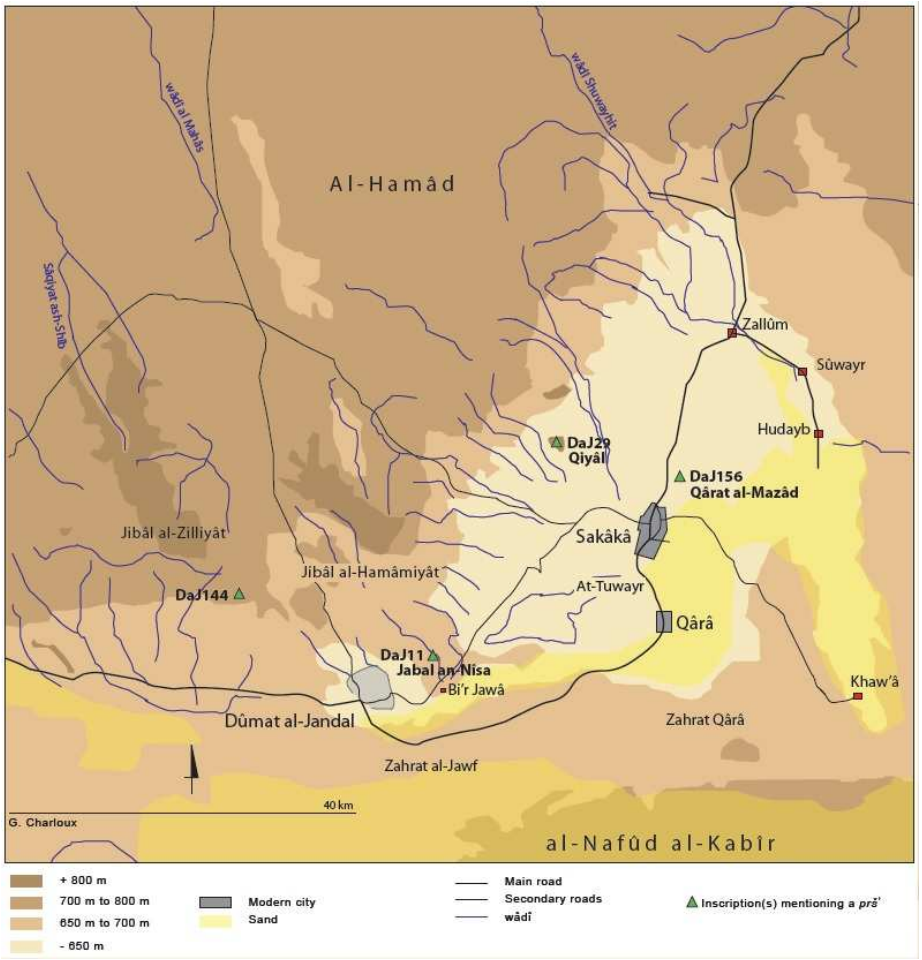

Figure 23: The distribution of the inscriptions mentioning a prš' *around Dūmat al-Jandal.*

a general commentary). In ThNS 7, he is said to be *prš'* and *hprk'*, i.e. a military officer of lower rank than a *strategos*. If my demonstration that the Rabīb'el of JSNab 43 and JSNab 34 was a *strategos* in Hegra in the interval between AD 40 and AD 72 is correct (Nehmé 2005–2006: 209–210), it is possible that ThNS 7 dates back to a period before he was appointed *strategos* in Hegra, when he was 'only' a *prš'* and a *hprk'*. The association of *prš'* and *hprk'* in the same text, here and in ThMNN 752, is also interesting because it gives an argument for the interpretation of *hprk'* as a cavalry officer, ἵππαρχος (cavalry commander) or ἔπαρχος (commander, *praefectus*), rather than as a ὕπαρχος, a subordinate commander, a lieutenant.[32]

We know that two brothers were probably *pršy'* at the same time (see above). Moreover, we learn from ThMNN 753 that a father and his son, who

[32]On *hprk'* see Healey (1993: 108–109).

wrote their signatures on the same rock face, were also both *pršyʾ*. Finally, the son and two other individuals are all said to be *bny pršyʾ*, *bny* probably meaning here, as it does in Palmyra, "members (of a brotherhood, a caravan, a city, etc.)".[33]

The list of names given in the table shows that each of the *pršyʾ*, as far as we can tell from the available data, appears only once in the inscriptions, with the probable exception of *ʿṣm*, who left his signature twice, once in al-ʿUdhayb (no. 3) and once in al-Sīj (no. 5), two sites which are about 40 km distant from each other. Finally, it is important to note that two individuals who are *pršʾ* are also *hprkʾ*: *rbybʾl* son of *dmsps* of ThNS 7, on whom see above, and *mntny* of ThMNN 752.[34]

I once asked myself whether *pršʾ* in Nabataean meant horse rider or camel rider but it is likely that had the mount been a camel, the Nabataeans would have used a word derived from *gml*, which exists in Nabataean (see the references in Nehmé forthcoming).[35] Two other words designating animal riders are known in Nabataean. One is *mqtbyʾ*, which appears in three inscriptions from two Egyptian sites, one south-west of Suez and one north of Myos Hormos, published by Littmann & Meredith (1953: nos 34, 37, and 46a). The text of the first two is almost identical and ends with a word in the emphatic plural which was derived by Littmann from QTB, a root which means in Arabic "to bind upon the camel the [saddle called] *qatab* [a pack-saddle]" (Lane 1863–1893: 2485), hence the meaning "cameleers" he suggested to give to the word. The alternative, since the *b* might also be read as a *r*, would be to read *mqtryʾ* and derive it from Syriac *mqtrʾ*, "zither player". Since inscription no. 64a mentions the "return of the *mqt{b/r}yʾ*", it is perhaps more likely that what is meant in these texts is "the return of the cameleers" or of someone who had to do with camels, rather than "the return of the zither players", but this remains speculation. The other word related to an animal rider in Nabataean is *rkbʾ*, which probably means horse or camel rider and is attested in two Nabataean inscriptions.[36]

3.4 The history of Dūmat al-Jandal in the 2nd and mid-6th centuries AD

The texts published in this article belong to two completely different groups: DaJ144PAr1 on the one hand, dated AD 548/549, and the DaJ144Nab inscriptions on the other hand, for which two dates are available, AD 114/115 and AD 135/136, i.e. the beginning of the Roman province of Arabia.

[33] On the use of *bny* in Nabataean, see Macdonald & Nehmé (forthcoming).

[34] The order in which the two professions are given is not the same in the two texts, see the table.

[35] Note that in Classical Arabic, *fāris* can apply to "a rider upon any solid-hoofed beast", but it is rare (Lane 1863–1893: 2368).

[36] Nehmé (2000: no. 5 and the commentary on p. 75–76) and *CIS* II 704 as reread in Nehmé (2000).

3.4.1 The 2nd century

We already knew, from the ancient sources and from two Latin inscriptions, that ancient Dūmah was part of the Roman province of Arabia and that soldiers of *legio III Cyrenaica* were stationed there. The sources are Pliny in the first century (*Natural History*, VI.XXXII.146), Ptolemy in the second century (*Geography*, 5.19.§7), Porphyry in the third century (*On Abstinence*, II.56), quoted in Eusebius of Caesarea (*Praeparatio Evangelica*, Book IV, chapter XVI), and Stephanus of Byzantium in the sixth century (*Ethnica*, s.v. Doumatha). Pliny mentions Domata and Hegra together but, contrary to what has often been suggested, there is nothing in Pliny to suggest that they both belonged to the Avalitae (Rohmer & Charloux 2015: 313). Ptolemy mentions Doumetha/Doumaitha as an inland city of Arabia and Porphyry (II.56) says that the inhabitants of Dūmah sacrificed a child every year and buried him under the altar they used to represent the deity.

The two Latin inscriptions are the following: a dedication to the god Sulmus by a centurion of *legio III Cyrenaica* named Flavius Dionysius, inscribed on an altar discovered near the oasis and dated to the 3rd century because it mentions two unnamed emperors who are likely to be Septimius Severus and Caracalla (AD 197–211);[37] and a stele discovered in Qaṣr al-Azraq, in present day Jordan (Bauzou 1996, see also Christol & Lenoir 2001), which mentions the road between Boṣra and Dūmah, along Wadi Sirḥān. The latter is traditionally dated to the third century, under the emperor Aurelian and after the Roman campaign against Palmyra in AD 272 which put an end to queen Zenobia's reign. It has recently been suggested, however, that it may date to *c.* AD 333–334, a period during which the restoration of the Azraq (ancient Amatha) road station and the building of a new fort there were undertaken by a military man (a "protector"), Vincentius, in the context of a desire to regain control of Roman military stations in arid zones at the end of the reign of Constantine (Aliquot 2016: 165).

We also knew, from the excavations undertaken both in the historic centre of the oasis (Sector A) and in the so-called western settlement (Sector C), that the site witnessed a second and third century occupation.[38] The fortifications excavated in the western settlement, 3 km west of the Nabataean centre, certainly controlled access to the valley. They are not firmly dated archaeologically yet but it is clear that they were in use during the Nabataean period. One structure, numbered L2018 and interpreted as a tower, located on top of the outcrop which overlooks the western settlement from the south, is particularly interesting because it yielded pottery dated to the interval between the 1st and the 4th century (Charloux et al. 2016: 227–228), i.e. in marked

[37] The alternative would have been Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus (AD 161–165) but Speidel (1987: 214) notes that the inscription contains the expression *Dominus noster Augustus*, which does not come into use before the reign of Septimius Severus. It is therefore likely to be dated to the interval between AD 197 and 211.

[38] Sector A, Trench 1: Loreto (2012: 171 and on the Roman pottery p. 174); Loreto (2016: 311–312). On the western settlement, see Charloux et al. (2014a; 2016).

contrast with the nearby Nabataean *triclinium* (structure L2017) which was used only during the Nabataean period (ibid.). The tower was therefore in use in the Roman period, as evidenced also by the discovery, in the collapse layer of the monument, of a Roman coin dated to the reign of Licinius (AD 308–324). A Nabataeo-Arabic inscription, DaJ000NabAr1, undated but palaeographically compatible with the 4th/late 4th and 5th centuries (see fig. 9) was also discovered at the bottom of the same collapse layer. The coin gives a *terminus post quem* to the inscription which is therefore either 4th century or later. Finally, we should probably mention that, among the material discovered during the excavation of the necropolis, between the historical area and the western settlement, both Roman pottery and a Roman coin of the reign of Hadrian were brought to light (see Charloux et al. 2014b: 200).

What the present inscriptions show is that Dūmah was *certainly* integrated into the province of Arabia nine years after the annexation, and it is very probable that this took place as early as AD 106 or, if what happened in Hegra also happened in Dūmah, possibly in AD 107.[39] Moreover, they show that a group of Nabataean cavalrymen were recruited in Roman military units and used, in the inscriptions they left behind, the same word as the one they used before AD 106. Finally, they show that the military rank of centurion – if the text where it appears is indeed dated to AD 114/115 – was also used by a Nabataean in the Roman period, whatever his exact role was in the area at that time.

The epigraphic material related to Roman Dūmah and its region that we now have at our disposal is of course still relatively scarce but it is slowly increasing. There are now six Nabataean, Nabataeo-Arabic and Pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions from al-Jawf dated to after AD 106: DaJ144Nab9 (AD 114/115), DaJ144Nab8 (AD 135/136), DaJ034Nab4 (AD 124/125),[40] ARNA.Nab 17 (AD 275/276),[41] DaJ000NabAr1 (*terminus post quem* AD 308), S1 (Sakākā, AD 428),[42] and DaJ144PAr1 (AD 548/549). Three of them are published here and all centuries are now represented in the region of al-Jawf.

3.4.2 The 6th century

The presence of a pre-Islamic Arabic inscription whose author is a Christian in the middle of the 6th century in the area of Dūmat al-Jandal raises the question of the authority which controlled the oasis and the region around it at this period, and hence of the identity of the author himself. What comes immediately to one's mind is the presence, in Dūmah, in 9 AH (AD 631), of the last known Kindite king, a man named Ukaydir son of ʿAbd al-Malik al-Kindī al-Sakūnī, who reigned over the oasis and who is said to have been a Christian (Robin 2012: 86 and Veccia Vaglieri 2012). Ukaydir belonged to a branch of

[39] On the possible annexation of Hegra only in AD 107, see Nehmé (2009: 42–44).

[40] This Ancient North Arabian–Nabataean bilingual will be published by J. Norris in the Proceedings of the 2017 Special Session of the Seminar for Arabian Studies.

[41] Macdonald (2009).

[42] Nehmé (2010: 71).

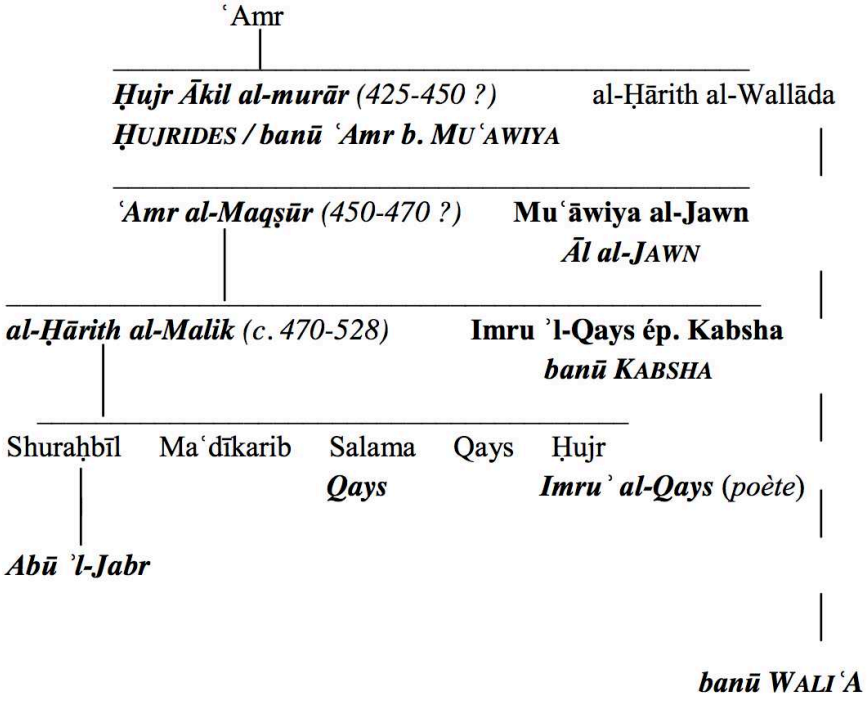

Figure 24: The Ḥujrid dynasty (after Robin 2012: 87).

the genealogy of Kinda called the banū Shukāma, which is different from the Ḥujrid branch of Kinda (Ibn al Kalbī, Nasab Maʿadd: 190). Of course, there is a gap of 82 years between AD 549 and AD 631 and many things may have happened in this interval, about which we know almost nothing. A few arguments can however be put forward to suggest a connection between Kinda, and more specifically the Ḥujrid kings, and Dūmat al-Jandal in the sixth century AD.

It is well known that one part of Kinda, called the Ḥujrids after the name of the founder of this dynasty (fig. 24), Ḥujr Ākil al-Murār, ruled over the tribal confederation of Maʿadd, in Central Arabia, on behalf of Ḥimyar, in the 5th and 6th centuries AD. According to Chr. Robin's interpretation of the Arab sources, Ḥujr controlled Maʿadd in Central Arabia as well as Rabīʿa in north-east Arabia, and launched expeditions against al-Baḥrayn and Lakhm.[43]

Ḥujr's reign, according to Yaʿqūbī, lasted 23 years. Not much is known of his son's reign, ʿAmr al-Maqṣūr, but he may be mentioned in a Nabataeo-Arabic inscription from Umm Jadhāyidh, dated AD 455/456.[44] His grandson,

[43]For this paragraph, I relied very much on the following contributions, which are not systematically quoted in the text: Robin (2012), Robin (2013), and Munt (2015: 443–446). Robin (2012), particularly, offers the most complete account on Kinda.

[44]UJadh 109: Fiema et al. (2015: 419–420), with reference to previous publications. The "king" referred to in this text might also be, possibly more likely, the Salīḥid leader ʿAmr b. Mālik.

al-Ḥārith al-Malik, or another al-Ḥārith,[45] may have concluded a peace treaty with the Byzantine emperor Anastasius (AD 491–518) before being killed, in AD 528 or a little earlier, by a coalition of Arab phylarchs, of two *duces* and others (Malalas, XVIII.16). Al-Ḥārith reigned also briefly in al-Ḥīra. One can assume an interval of 50 to 75 years between the beginning of the reign of Ḥujr Ākil al-Murār and al-Ḥārith al-Malik's death, and this therefore suggests that the former's reign started somewhere in the middle of the 5th century AD.

What happened after al-Ḥārith al-Malik was killed, which is precisely the period which interests us here, is not clear (see Robin 2012: 77). According to the Arab sources, his four sons divided the kingdom and each took one part, in two different areas: the right bank of the lower Euphrates and the neighbouring steppe for three of them (Maʿdīkarib b. al-Ḥārith, Shuraḥbīl b. al-Ḥārith, Salama b. al-Ḥārith), and the area south-east of Mecca for the fourth (Ḥujr b. al-Ḥārith). The Byzantine sources offer a different story of the succession of al-Ḥārith. According to Procopius (Wars, I.20.9), a Byzantine ambassador asked the Ḥimyarite king, in AD 531, to establish a man named Kaïsos (Arabic Qays), whose parents had been phylarchs and who was a fugitive because he had killed a relative of the Ḥimyarite king, as phylarch over Maʿadd. This man used to live in a land "utterly destitute of human habitation" but was a good warrior. Another Byzantine source (Nonnosus cited by Photius, *Library*, 3) says that a man named Kaïsos, the descendant of a man named al-Ḥārith, and almost certainly the same man as the one mentioned in Procopius, was the head of two important Arab tribes, the Chindenoi and the Maadenoi, i.e. obviously Kinda and Maʿadd. Three Byzantine embassies were sent to this Kaïsos but in the end, Kaïsos set out for Byzantium, having divided his chieftaincy between his brothers Ambros (ʿAmr) and Iezidos (Yazīd). According to Robin, this may have happened around AD 540, when the war between Byzantium and Persia resumed.

The identification of the Kaïsos mentioned in the Byzantine sources is a difficult problem. The two most likely interpretations are the following: Kaïsos is the pre-Islamic Arab poet Imruʾ al-Qays b. Ḥujr b. al-Ḥārith al-Malik, or he is Qays b. Salama b. al-Ḥārith al-Malik (Robin 2012: 79–80). Whatever the case, we are, in AD 549, one generation, or possibly at the beginning of the second generation, after the death al-Ḥārith al-Malik and we may tentatively suggest that his sons or his grandson(s) were still active, in AD 549, in the area formerly controlled by al-Ḥārith, at least until the battle of Shiʿb Jabala, possibly around AD 560.

If this is correct, all that remains to make is the connection between the Ḥujrids and Dūmat al-Jandal. First, at the time of al-Ḥārith and Kaïsos, there were alliances between Byzantium and the Ḥujrids and there were contacts between the two, embassies being sent to the Ḥujrids and visits being made by members of the Ḥujrid dynasty to Byzantium. Since the Ḥujrids were present

[45] P. Edwell (2015: 233) is more cautious in identifying the al-Ḥārith mentioned in John Malalas' account with the Kindite king al-Ḥārith. He suggests it might also be a ruler associated with the banū Thaʿlaba.

in north-east Arabia (because they governed Rabīʿa, and particularly Bakr), Dūmat al-Jandal was a central place for them to be in the early 6th century AD, between eastern Arabia and Byzantium.

Second, it is said that the Sassanian King Qubadh I asked al-Ḥārith al-Malik to impose his religion, Mazdakism, on the Arabs of the Najd and of the Tihāma. The Tihāma designates the Red Sea shore in the area of Mecca (and further north and south), including some inland territories since Mecca and Yathrib are said to be in the Tihāma (Robin 2008: 172). If this is true, it would mean that al-Ḥārith was considered to have authority over these regions of north-west Arabia, but Dūmat al-Jandal is certainly too far from the Red Sea seashore to have been part of the Tihāma.

Third, a possible link between al-Ḥārith al-Malik and Dūmat al-Jundal can be glimpsed at in the chronicle of John Malalas (XVIII.16),[46] who says:

> In that year it happened that enmity developed between the *dux* of Palestine Diomedes, a *silentiarius*, and the phylarch Arethas. Arethas took fright and went to the inner *limes* towards India. On learning this Alamoundaros, the Persian Saracen, attacked the Roman phylarch, captured him, and killed him, for he had 30,000 men with him.

Malalas does not give the date of the death of al-Ḥārith but only the date of the end of the attack, AD 528, and it is therefore likely that al-Ḥārith died in AD 528 or a little earlier. What is meant by the expression "inner *limes*" is not certain, but it probably refers, as suggested by Theophanes' addition to Malalas (435.9) a place "where none of the Romans have ever been". If Arethas is indeed the Ḥujrid ruler al-Ḥārith al-Malik and was fleeing from (Third) Palestine, i.e. from anywhere between southern Jordan and Hegra, it is likely that he was going either south or east. A good candidate, as suggested by Robin (2012: 76) could be Dūmat al-Jandal, because this place was halfway between Aqaba and the Euphrates and above all accessible to al-Mundhir.[47]

Additionally, it may not be a coincidence that Hind, al-Ḥārith al-Malik's daughter, who married the Naṣrid king al-Mundhir III (AD *c.* 503–554) and became the mother of al-Mundhir's successor in al-Ḥīra, founded a monastery consecrated to a god whose name is identical to that of the god mentioned in DaJ144PAr1 in al-Ḥīra around AD 560.[48] The foundation inscription of the monastery is known only from the quotations in al-Bakrī and Yāqūt but it clearly mentions *ʾl-ʾlh*.[49] This may be taken as an argument for a connection

[46]On this passage, see also Sipilä (2004: 201 n. 100 ("the escape eastwards")) and Edwell (2015: 232–233).

[47]Note that Caskel (1966: II, 329) suggests that al-Ḥārith may have controlled the oasis of Dūmah.

[48]Because of the mention of the Sassanian kings Khusraw Anūshirwān (AD 532–579) and ʿAmr son of al-Mundhir (554–569), cf. Robin (2008: 186).

[49]See Robin (2008: 185–186): al-Bakrī: ... *fa-ʾl-Il(ā)h al-l(a)dhī banat la-hu h(ā)dhā ʾl-bayt yaghfira khaṭiyyata-hā wa-yataraḥḥama ʿalay-hā wa-ʿalà waladi-ha...*, "puisse Dieu pour qui elle a construit cette demeure pardonner ses péchés, avoir pitié d'elle et de son fils"; small variations, irrelevant for *ʾl-ʾlh*, in Yāqūt.

between the dynasty which ruled in Dūmat al-Jandal in the mid-sixth century and the family of the Kindite ruler al-Ḥārith al-Malik.

Finally, it may also not be a coincidence that the name of the author's father in DaJ144PAr1 is *šlmh*, a name which is attested in the Nabataean inscriptions of the Arabian peninsula only twice (see the commentary of the text). It may therefore be tentatively suggested that the author's father, i.e. the same generation as the father of Kaïsos, bore a name which had a connection with the part of the Kingdom of Kinda (or what remained of it) which belonged to Qays b. Salama b. al-Hārith.

Of course, the most important link between Kinda and Dūmat al-Jandal is given by Ukaydir. If we accept the idea that Kindite rulers, whoever they were (Maʿdīkarib, Shuraḥbīl or perhaps Salama since the fourth son of Ḥārith was apparently in the area south-east of Mecca) still controlled the area of Dūmat al-Jandal in AD 549, this leaves only three generations between AD 549 and the reign of Ukaydir. I would therefore tentatively suggest that although the kingdom of Kinda collapsed after the reign of al-Ḥārith, i.e. after *c.* AD 528, Kindite rulers or Kindite local chieftains, from different lineages, remained in the area until the final battle of Shiʿb Jabala, which Robin (2013: 216) suggests to place in AD 560. Since Ukaydir was Christian, and since the author of AD 549 was also a Christian, it is tempting to consider that at least some of the Kindite rulers were Christian already in the mid-sixth century AD, which would also explain why Hind, the daughter of al-Ḥārith, was Christian.

4 The significance of the texts

DaJ144PAr1 is important for several reasons. First, it is the only text dated to the sixth century from north-west Arabia. Until its discovery, there was a 170 year gap, possibly slightly less, between the latest Nabataeo-Arabic text, from Eilat, probably dated to the last quarter of the 5th century (Avner et al. 2013), and the earliest Islamic one in the Ḥijāz, the so-called Zuhayr inscription, dated AD 644 (Al-Ghabban 2008). This gap is now partly filled by this mid-sixth century text. Second, the presence of the cross and the use of the divine name *ʾl-ʾlh* are two strong arguments to suggest that the author was a Christian, possibly a Ḥujrid who was a member of one of the chieftains who succeeded the reign of al-Ḥārith al-Malik after AD 528. Third, it shows that in the mid-sixth century, one of the scripts used in this region was definitely Arabic, as was probably the language spoken by the people who used it. This does not, however, exclude the persistence of Nabataeo-Arabic script fossils, as evidenced by the repetition of *dkr* at the beginning of the text. Finally, this text is important for the history of the region of Dūmat al-Jandal because it shows that there was, if not a Christian community, at least one individual who was a Christian, who claimed it by drawing a cross and by asking the Christian god to remember him. It is a nice coincidence that recent excavations in Dūmat al-Jandal have yielded, in pre-Islamic levels of a sounding undertaken near the ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb mosque, a small silver bell interpreted as a liturgical bell

(Loreto 2017) which would be the first archaeological evidence of Christianity in Dūmat al-Jandal.

As for the seventeen Nabataean inscriptions, their importance is threefold. Two are dated to early years of the era of the Roman province of Arabia, and are the first clear evidence that the area was probably integrated in the province at the same time as the rest of the Nabataean kingdom. Second, one text mentions a new centurion, who was probably Nabataean and who may have been recruited in the Roman army, if the date of DaJ144Nab 10 is indeed AD 114/115. Finally, several texts mention Nabataean cavalrymen who were certainly members of Roman military units since they appear in texts dated to AD 135/136. In all these texts, the military men use the same words as the ones they would have used before the annexation.

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Indexes

Index of personal names

gršʿw	DaJ144Nab5+6* (*br tymw*), Nab8* (*br tymw*). * = **same author signing twice, *pršʾ* (AD 135–136)**
{d/r}ʿytw	DaJ144Nab4
zbdw	DaJ144Nab13
ḥgʿ{b/n}w	DaJ144PAr1 (*br šlmh*) **probable author (AD 549)**
k{h}ylw	DaJ144Nab16 (*br tymʿbdt*) **author**
{mgyn}t	DaJ144Nab2 (*br ʿbdʾlhy*) **author**
{m}ʿ{d/r}w	DaJ144Nab11 (*br šmylw*) **author**
mškw	DaJ144Nab14 (*br ʿbdʾlgʾ*) **author**
ʿbdʾlgʾ	DaJ144Nab14
ʿbdʾlhy	DaJ144Nab2, Nab4 (*br tymw*), Nab7, Nab9* (*br tymw*), Nab12* (*br tymw*). *= **same author signing twice (AD 114–115)**
ʿbdt	DaJ144Nab4* (*br ʿbdʾlhy*), Nab7* (*br ʿbdʾlhy*). * = **same author signing twice**
ʿzyzw	DaJ144Nab10 (*br ʿ{w}yd{w}*) **author**
ʿ{w}yd{w}	DaJ144Nab10
ʿlw{p}	DaJ144Nab15 (*br š[----]*) **author**
{p}[ṣ]{y}w	DaJ144Nab1
{r/d}ʿytw	DaJ144Nab4
rk{ym}	DaJ144Nab17 (*br* ----) **author**
šlmh	DaJ144PAr1
šmylw	DaJ144Nab11
tymw	DaJ144Nab1, Nab3, Nab4, Nab9, Nab12, Nab13* (*br zbdw*). * = **author**
tymʿbdt	DaJ144Nab1* (*br tymw*), Nab3* (*br tymw*), Nab5+6, Nab16. * = **same author signing twice, *pršʾ***

Index of words

ʾl-ʾlh	DaJ144PAr1	the god (God)
bṭb	DaJ144Nab10	in well-being
dkr (2x)	DaJ144PAr1	may be remembered (Arabic)
dkyr	DaJ144Nab9–11, Nab 15–17	may be remembered (Nabataean Aramaic)
y{r}[ḥ]	DaJ144PAr1	month
pršʾ	DaJ144Nab1, Nab5 + 6, Nab8	cavalryman
{q}[n]{ṭ}rywnʾ	DaJ144Nab10	centurion
šnt	DaJ144Nab8, Nab 9	year
tltyn	DaJ144Nab8	thirty
{t}šʿ	DaJ144Nab9	nine

Index of signs

X	DaJ144Nab9, Nab12

Index of numerals

4	DaJ144PAr1
100	DaJ144PAr1
20	DaJ144PAr1
3	DaJ144PAr1

Sigla

ARNA.Nab	Nabataean inscriptions in Winnett & Reed (1970)
DaJ	Inscriptions discovered in Dūmat al-Jandal
CIS II	*Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum, Pars Secunda, Inscriptiones Aramaicas Continens*, 1889
JSNab	Nabataean inscriptions in Jaussen & Savignac (1909–1922)
Lisān	Ibn Manẓūr (1981)
LPArab	Arabic inscriptions in Littmann (1949)
MP	Nabataean inscriptions recorded by J.T. Milik, J. Starcky, and L. Nehmé in Petra, partly published in Nehmé (2012)
OCIANA	Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia. `http://krcfm.orient.ox.ac.uk/fmi/webd#ociana` (accessed September 10th, 2017)
S	Inscriptions recorded in Sakākā
ThMNN	Nabataean inscriptions in Al-Theeb (2010)
ThNIS	Nabataean inscriptions in Al-Theeb (2011)
ThNQT	ANA inscriptions in Al-Theeb (2000 [1431]a)
ThNS	Nabataean inscriptions in Al-Theeb (2014)
ThNTS	ANA inscriptions in Al-Theeb (2000 [1431]b)
ThNUJ	Nabataean inscriptions in Al-Theeb (2002)
UJadh	Inscriptions recorded in Umm Jadhāyidh

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